



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***During Financial Aid Awareness Month, Help Make College Possible for Your Future Student with a College Illinois!® 529 Prepaid Tuition Plan***

CHICAGO--It's Financial Aid Awareness Month, and students are busy completing the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) to determine their eligibility for federal, state and institutional aid for college. While it's critical for students to complete the FAFSA so they can maximize their aid for college, it's hard to know how much aid will be available—and what your student will be eligible for—by the time he or she is ready to attend college. With a [College Illinois!® 529 Prepaid Tuition Plan](#), you can reduce that uncertainty, and even help your student graduate from college with little or no student loan debt.

A College Illinois! plan offers a simple way to *prepay* the cost of college tuition for a child or grandchild, so their college education is covered at a school within their plan no matter how much financial aid is available and no matter how high tuition increases by the time they are ready to attend.

Currently, about 70% of students in bachelor degree programs in Illinois graduate with student loan debt.

"Applying for and maximizing financial aid can help minimize student loan debt, but with federal and state budget challenges and the increasing cost of college tuition, parents can't be certain that aid will be available for their student," says Eric Zarnikow, executive director of the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#), the state's college access agency and the administrator of the College Illinois! Program. He says relying on the availability of grants and scholarships alone to fund a college education can also be risky.

That's where College Illinois! comes in.

"We started thinking about college costs when our daughter was three years old, and after researching the options we purchased a College Illinois! plan," said Sandra Archambeau of Joliet. "What a great

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decision! Our daughter is now a sophomore at Western Illinois, and is doing so well that she received a scholarship. College Illinois! covers her tuition and fees, and the scholarship is covering other expenses, so we are thrilled that our daughter will graduate from college debt-free. College Illinois! made that possible.”

College Illinois! offers several flexible programs that cover tuition and mandatory fees at Illinois community colleges, Illinois four-year public universities, and at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. The value of plan benefits can also be used at most private institutions in Illinois and at most out of state schools.

If a student receives a scholarship or grant and there are unused College Illinois! benefits, they can be held for future use, transferred to another family member, or refunded up to the amount of the scholarship.

Interested in finding out more about College Illinois!? Take part in the program’s [online Scavenger Hunt](#) via Facebook and receive a chance to win a **\$1,000 visa gift card**. Simply like the [College Illinois! Facebook page](#) and be sure to complete the three questions to win an entry into the drawing. There is no purchase necessary to enter and all entries must be submitted by 11:59 pm CST on March 14, 2016. Please see the contest rules at <http://bit.ly/1PpoAnl>.

### **About College Illinois!**

Since its inception in 1998, College Illinois! has been focused on providing an affordable option to help make college a reality for Illinois families. Administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the College Illinois! 529 Prepaid Tuition Program offers a unique set of benefits, including protection from tuition inflation, flexibility, and significant tax benefits. Program assets, which are held in the Illinois Prepaid Tuition Trust Fund and kept separate from all public moneys or funds of the state, are professionally managed by an experienced team led by a Chief Investment Officer and established third party asset managers. By law, College Illinois! funds can only be used to pay benefits on behalf of plan beneficiaries and to pay the costs of running the Program.

More information on plan options and benefits, as well as a complete description of terms and conditions associated with the purchase of a plan, is available at [www.collegeillinois.org](http://www.collegeillinois.org).

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